

# **DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE CLIMATOLOGISTS RECOGNIZED STATE CLIMATE OFFICE IN THE NATIONAL CLIMATE SERVICES PARTNERSHIP**

September 2000

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The mission of the National Climate Services Partnership is to effectively provide the nation with high-quality, timely, and relevant climate services. This comes at a time when the demand for climate services is at record levels and is expected to continue growing. The National Climate Services Partnership, comprised of national and regional centers and American Association of State Climatologists (AASC) recognized state climate offices, was created to meet this need. The Partnership seeks to meet the following objectives:

- Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the partners
- Minimize duplication of services
- Streamline climate information delivery

This document defines the role of the AASC Recognized State Climate Office (ARSCO) within this partnership. The ARSCOs bring their climatological expertise and climate resources to serve the citizens of their states with specific and first-hand support. This support will aid in climate-related decisions for users in the public and private sectors.

## **II. THE NATIONAL CLIMATE SERVICES PARTNERSHIP**

### **Role of National Partner**

The National Partner, the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC), is responsible for the archive, quality control, dissemination, monitoring, and description of global and nationally observed climate data. These data are the source for local, regional, national, and global climate descriptors and summaries produced by NCDC.

### **Role of Regional Partner**

The Regional Partners, the Regional Climate Centers (RCCs), are responsible for the collection of regionally observed climate data and the application of these data to region-wide problems and issues. Dissemination of climate data and information are targeted to a broad regional audience. The RCCs will also serve end users in those states lacking a state climate office.

### **Role of the State Partner**

To satisfy the current and growing needs for climate services, climatological expertise must be readily available at the local level. The AASC Recognized State Climate Office has the best understanding of the climate of its state, and the ability and knowledge to provide climate data and information to the user.

The ARSCO will engage in a variety of activities and services that include one or more of the following:

- Coordinate and collect weather observations for the purpose of climate monitoring
- Summarize and disseminate weather and climate information to the user

community

- Demonstrate to the user community the value of climate information in the decision making process
- Perform climate impact assessments and weather event evaluations
- Conduct climate research, diagnosis, and projections

The National Climatic Data Center, the Regional Climate Centers, and the American Association of State Climatologists are fully committed to supporting the development of the ARSCO program.

The process of becoming an ARSCO is detailed in Section VI. The target is to have an ARSCO in every state and Puerto Rico by the end of 2002. In order to reach this target, the partners are encouraged to help cultivate potential ARSCOs in states without one.

### **III. ARSCO TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The following set of capabilities and activities defines the requirements for qualification as an AASC Recognized State Climate Office.

#### **Communication Capabilities**

ARSCOs must have adequate access to the Internet in order to connect to data archives at the NCDC, RCCs, and other locations. Multiple pathways for dissemination, e.g., telephone, fax, mail, and e-mail, shall be used and ARSCOs shall maintain Web sites.

#### **Information Services**

ARSCOs shall have the capability and the willingness to provide data and information to users. ARSCOs are encouraged to charge fees for services in order to cover the cost of filling the users' requests.

#### **Research**

ARSCOs investigate relationships between climate and human activities that impact their state.

#### **Outreach**

ARSCOs shall evaluate the needs of the user community regularly, adjusting and developing products and services as required. Outreach activities will include the following:

- Education: The ARSCOs will educate the people of their states on current and emerging climate issues. This may involve a combination of public appearances, publications, and information.
- Climate Products: The ARSCOs will publish climate information, both printed and on-line.
- Awareness: The ARSCOs will promote its program as well as regional and national programs.
- Media Contacts: The ARSCOs will cultivate print and broadcast media contacts since they can greatly assist the ARSCOs' efforts to foster awareness and educate the public.

#### **Monitoring and Impact Assessments**

ARSCOs monitor current climate conditions, evaluate potential future impacts and place events in historical perspective.

### **IV. QUALIFYING STATE INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS**

The ARSCO in each state shall be hosted by a state entity, preferably an agency in the public services sector. Examples of such state agencies or institutions are:

- accredited universities
- environmental agency such as a Department of Natural Resources
- separate state agency at the Governor's staff level

The individual holding the directorship of the ARSCO, usually the State Climatologist, must also be qualified in terms of education and experience. The individual should also have the desire and the "heart" to serve his/her state's need for climatological data and information. The individual should be a willing advocate on behalf of the ARSCO and the other partners. The individual must be able to devote an appropriate amount of time to make the ARSCO successful.

## **V. ADVANTAGE OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALIFYING ARSCOS**

The National Climatic Data Center, the six Regional Climate Centers, and the American Association of State Climatologists are committed to supporting the operations of the ARSCO program. Through this partnership qualifying ARSCO's will be able to take advantage of the following resources.

1. Access to a broad array of high quality climate data, information, evaluation tools and value-added products from the other partners that would not be otherwise available.

The NCDC and the RCCs will provide "reasonable" amounts of data and information free of charge as long as these data are used to support the on-going operations of the ARSCO.

2. Increased opportunities to pursue funding and support as a participant in an integrated climate services partnership, working cooperatively with other partners.

The NCDC will conduct a State Climatologist Exchange Program each year. The program allows ARSCO staff to work at NCDC on topics of mutual benefit. These fully supported (i.e., travel, per diem and salary) work opportunities are provided on a competitive basis. Program announcements are made in December with work completion required by the end of September of the following year.

The NCDC and RCCs will provide assistance to the ARSCOs, if requested, in establishing fair and equitable pricing guidelines for climate services to be consistent with the NCDC and the RCC price guidelines.

The RCCs will work to foster climate programs within their regions through a variety of means such as funding of joint projects, hosting region-wide ARSCO annual meetings, and other related activities.

The NCDC and the RCCs will work with the AASC to promote the ARSCO programs to funding agencies and through available grant/proposal opportunities.

3. Enhanced visibility through promotion of service capabilities by other partners. Recognition and identification of ARSCOs as the primary resource and source of expertise for state service.

## **VI. BECOMING AN ARSCO - THE PROCESS**

To become an ARSCO, a state agency must secure a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the National Climatic Data Center. The MOA shall be between the NCDC and the host institution. The Director of NCDC shall sign on behalf of the government and a senior management official must sign for the state. (See

appendix A for a sample MOA.) The MOA may be established once the AASC has officially recognized a state agency as an ARSCO (see below.)

For the AASC to officially recognize a state agency as an ARSCO, three basic documents must be submitted to the AASC President:

1. A document that details current and planned activities that demonstrate a willingness and commitment to meet the ARSCO Terms of Reference. (See Section III.)
2. A letter of support from the state's Regional Climate Center Director (See Appendix B for a sample letter.)
3. A letter of support from at least one National Weather Service Forecast Office serving the state. (See Appendix C for a sample letter.)

Once the documents have been received and approved, the AASC President will notify the state agency and the NCDC.

## **VII. ACTIVITIES REPORT AND REVIEW**

Each ARSCO shall submit a written "state of the State Climate Office" report once per year to the ARSCO Review Committee. The Review Committee shall be comprised of the AASC Executive Board (President, Past-President, President-elect, and Secretary/Treasurer) plus a fifth AASC voting member (preferably a RCC Director); NCDC shall provide a non-voting member to the committee. The committee shall select a chair from its members.

The committee will review the annual reports and provide recommendations and comments to the AASC. When the ARSCO of a Review Committee member is being evaluated, that committee member shall be excused from the evaluation process.

If a majority of the Review Committee finds that the Terms of Reference are not being met - as evidenced by activities in the report or through other available reports - the chair of the committee shall notify the ARSCO director. In the event of such notification, the ARSCO will have one year to demonstrate compliance with the Terms. During this period, the AASC will provide assistance and support to the notified ARSCO in an effort to achieve compliance. At the end of the one-year period, the (new) Review Committee shall re-evaluate the ARSCO. Should the ARSCO fail to meet the Terms of Reference a second time, the committee shall forward a recommendation for suspension of ARSCO status and privileges.

Suspension shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the ARSCO Directors present at the annual meeting, subject to the presence of a quorum. Suspension will entail a loss of Partnership privileges (as identified in Section V) and any additional benefits provided to ARSCOs through the Partnership and the AASC. (Note: While ARSCO privileges may be suspended, the ARSCO Director, as a member of the AASC, will retain the benefits of associate membership.)

Timelines:

ARSCO annual reports shall be submitted to the AASC President for processing by the Review Committee at least eight weeks prior to the upcoming annual meeting of the AASC (i.e., approximately the first of June)

Review Committee recommendations/notifications are to be made at the time of, or prior to, the annual meeting. Possible outcomes are "acceptable" or "unacceptable."

First time "unacceptable" reviews shall result in a recommendation to the AASC for placing the ARSCO on probation. Two consecutive such reviews

shall result in a recommendation to the AASC to remove the AASC Recognition of the SCO.

#### **VIII. FINAL WORDS**

This is a critical time for the establishment of a national, regional, and state partnership for climate services. Public awareness of climate issues is growing with each new "climate event," resulting in an increased demand for climate services at all levels. A strong partnership will provide the foundation and framework for implementing an effective and efficient climate services system.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

BETWEEN THE

NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER (NCDC)

AND THE

STATE AGENCY/INSTITUTION

TO RECOGNIZE

SUB-AGENCY

AS THE

AASC RECOGNIZED STATE CLIMATE OFFICE (ARSCO)

FOR

STATE

The National Climatic Data Center officially recognizes \_\_\_\_\_ as the State Climate Office for \_\_\_\_\_. The Office shall have all the rights and privileges of an ARSCO. The Climate Office in \_\_\_\_\_ has demonstrated adequate support from the Regional Climate Center, the National Weather Service, and the host state agency. Furthermore, having been certified by the American Association of State Climatologists as an ARSCO, official status as an AASC Recognized State Climate Office is thereby granted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, National Climatic Data Center

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Attachment

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE REGIONAL CLIMATE CENTER LETTER OF SUPPORT

RCC Letterhead

Dr. Jim Angel  
President  
American Association of State Climatologists  
Illinois State Water Survey  
2204 Griffith Drive  
Champaign, IL 61820-7495

OR CURRENT PRESIDENT

Dear Dr. Angel,

The \_\_\_\_\_ Regional Climate Center is pleased to offer its support for \_\_\_\_\_ to be recognized as the AASC Recognized State Climate Office (ARSCO) for the state of \_\_\_\_\_.

We have met with \_\_\_\_\_, the Director of the Climate Office and have found that his/her program plans are adequate. The \_\_\_\_\_ Regional Climate Center is committed to work with \_\_\_\_\_ in its role as the ARSCO for \_\_\_\_\_.

It is a pleasure to provide this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Director

cc:  
State Agency seeking ARSCO status

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE LETTER OF SUPPORT

National Weather Service letterhead

Dr. Jim Angel  
President  
American Association of State Climatologists  
Illinois State Water Survey  
2204 Griffith Drive  
Champaign, IL 61820-7495

OR CURRENT PRESIDENT

Dear Dr. Angel,

The \_\_\_\_\_ National Weather Service Office is pleased to offer its support to \_\_\_\_\_ as the recognized Climate Office for \_\_\_\_\_. We will strive to work jointly with the Climate Office in the provision of climatological data and information. We recognize that it is only through cooperation that we can meet the climatological needs of the citizens of \_\_\_\_\_.

We welcome the Climate Office as a partner in the provision of climate services.

cc:  
Regional Climate Center  
NWS Regional Headquarters